



THE COMMUNICATOR

Grant County Employee Newsletter

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Guest Columnist Diane Perkins; Clerk of Court

'Remember the Good Old Days?' 'Nothing stays the same', 'Time changes everything'. These phrases certainly apply to the Clerk of Court's office. Gone are the days of using a fountain pen for bookkeeping records; traveling to Platteville, Fennimore and Boscobel on Monday afternoons to conduct municipal traffic court; and having a 'No Court Day' on Tuesdays because it was 'Probate Day'. Now all accounting records are on computer, municipal court offenders come to the courthouse to enter their pleas and court is held everyday! The arrival of the computer in 1993 really helped bring the office into the 20th Century. With the Wisconsin Supreme Court Director of State Courts office the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) was initiated for all counties that were interested in becoming computerized. The implementation of CCAP allows for a statewide system of records management and Internet access to the court's open records for the public.

The Clerk of Court is a county constitutional officer, elected every two years. The primary duties of this office are outlined in section 59.40 WI Stats. as well as Supreme Court rules. The Clerk of Court is required to maintain a records management system of all documents filed with each circuit branch, except the Probate branch; keep a record of all court proceedings and collect various forfeitures, fines and filing fees. There are many divisions within the office; traffic, criminal, family, paternity, small claims and civil.

The Grant County Clerk of Court's office has nine employees at the present time including the Clerk and each Judge has a judicial assistant and court reporter. The courthouse-remodeling project allowed each Judge to finally have a courtroom equipped to handle a jury trial. A third courtroom or 'Hearing Room' as it is called is utilized by out of county Judges to conduct hearing on cases that a Grant County Judge has been substituted on. Video conferencing is now available in each courtroom therefore eliminating the need for a prisoner to be physically brought to court from the county jail or prison in Boscobel.

The Clerk is responsible for a budget of over \$650,000 and collection of over \$550,000 per year in fine, filing fees and reimbursement of attorneys fees; upkeep of the Courthouse Law Library, providing jury management services for both branches, and working with the Department of State in processing passport applications for anyone wishing to travel outside of the Country.

This office works very closely with local law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney's office, Child Support Agency, Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Corrections, State Public Defender's office and lawyers state wide. Serving the general public in a friendly, courteous and professional manner is of highest importance.

In this time of budget constraints, trying to do more with less is a continuing struggle for the court system and would be much more difficult if it was not for the hard work and dedication of the staff in the Clerk of Court's office. To all of you I say a big heartfelt 'THANK-YOU' for your commitment and professionalism to all who pass through the Courthouse doors.

With the 21st Century now in full swing, time is sure to cast more challenges and changes upon the Court system, but the Clerk of Court's office will always be committed to providing efficient use of taxpayer money and excellent service to all users.



The Grant County Clerk of Court's Staff

*Carole Sturmer, Connie Miles, Kim Kohn,
Jan Udell, Diane Perkins, Annette Hochhausen,
Patricia Hornung, Elaine Majerus
and Colleen Nelson*

When can you get your Flu Shot?

The Grant County Health Department is preparing for a busy Flu Immunization this fall. They, along with other health care providers, will begin giving vaccine in late October.

Vaccine given before late October, November and December will begin losing its effectiveness before the Wisconsin Flu season starts.

The Health Department will set up clinics through out the county. Dates will be announced in news articles when they are finalized.

This year, there is an adequate supply of vaccine so there is no need to be concerned about getting yours early. The suggested use of vaccine this year includes most of the healthy population including infants with health concerns. If SARS should come to Grant County, having had the flu vaccine will prevent its symptoms from being confused with SARS.

Pneumonia vaccine will also be available for persons over 65 years of age and younger persons with chronic illness.

Clinics will be scheduled for County Employees and County Board members at worksites, etc. Our county HMO will reimburse the Health Department for this service. If you have any questions, call (608)723-6416.

*- Linda Adrian,
Director/Health Officer*



Eugene Bartels; County Board Chair

I hope you all have had a good summer. It's hard to believe this one is about over. I don't know where it went.

The Grant County Fair is over for another year. Overall I think it was very successful. I hope you all found time to enjoy the festivities!

The planner is still working on the 5 county overflow jail facility project. We won't know for a while yet if this facility will be feasible.

The departments are preparing annual budgets again. Health insurance premiums are going up again making it hard to avoid budget increases. We still don't have a definite budget from the state which means we don't know how much funding we can count on from them.

Please contact me at 723-2711 if I can help you with any problems that may arise.



Dawn Mergen; Personnel Specialist

Grant County's **Open Enrollment** meeting has been scheduled for Monday, October 27th at the Administration building from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. Representatives will be at the meeting from Dean Health Plan, Medical Associates Health Plans, Wisconsin Deferred Compensation Program, The Equitable, Nationwide Retirement Solutions, EBC Flex, and AFLAC. This meeting starts the annual open enrollment period where employees

may make health and dental insurance changes, sign up for EBC Flex, AFLAC insurance, or make deferred compensation changes. The open enrollment period runs for about 3 weeks and all changes are effective January 1, 2004. Watch for more information attached to your October paychecks.

Grant County offers it's benefit eligible employee's two health insurance plans to choose from. The main differences in the plans are listed below.

	<u>Medical Associates Health Plans</u>		<u>Dean Health Plan</u>	
Primary Physician	Not necessary		Required	
Coverage Area	Parts of Iowa, Illinois & Wisconsin		Southern Wisconsin	
Lifetime Maximum	\$2 Million (effective 1/1/04)		Unlimited	
Prescription Drug Copay	\$5 generic / \$10 brand name		\$6 generic / \$10 brand name	
Birth Control Coverage	Only if medically necessary		Covered same as above	
Routine Eye Exam	Coverage frequency based on age		Covered annually	
Eye Wear Coverage	Partially covered		None	
Hearing Aid	No coverage		\$500 every 36 months	
Fitness Club Discounts	None		At some clubs	
Monthly Premiums (effective 1/1/04)	County <u>Pays</u>	Employee <u>Pays</u>	County <u>Pays</u>	Employee <u>Pays</u>
Single	\$445.25	\$ 0	\$ 420.97	\$ 0
Employee/Child	\$681.24	\$120.22	\$ 679.87	\$119.98
Employee/Spouse	\$794.79	\$140.24	\$ 751.45	\$132.60

Call or stop in to see me if you are thinking about changing health insurance carriers. I can tell you how to get a complete schedule of benefits and provider list from both carriers.

Let me know if you have any questions concerning open enrollment. You can reach me at 723-2540.

Dental Insurance Premiums are increasing — We recently learned that unfortunately, due to high claims, our dental insurance premiums will be increasing about 44% for 2004. This preliminary figure would cause premiums to jump between \$6 and \$34 per month depending on your plan type. Please start planning for this increase. Final rates won't be available to us until later this month.

Exciting EBC Flex News — The government recently approved reimbursement for over-the-counter medications to participants of tax saving flex plans. Over-the-counter meds can be flexed until the end of this year and will make flex plans more attractive for next year. This new ruling could take care of the "use it or lose it" situation. Any medications used to promote general health such as supplements, vitamins and herbal remedies are not eligible. The key wording is "...to alleviate or treat personal injuries or sickness..." **Pain relievers, allergy medications, antacids and cold remedies** qualify under the new ruling. Please contact Dawn at (608)723-2540 if you want to learn more about this great tax savings program.

10 Tips to Reduce Low Back Pain

1. Start the workday with some stretching – loosen up your muscles

2. Avoid unnecessary bending – handle loads at waist level whenever possible

3. Avoid unnecessary twisting – move your feet

4. Avoid reaching out – handle the load close to your body

5. Avoid excessive weights – get help or use a handling aid

6. Lift slowly and smoothly – avoid quick, jerky movements

7. Stay in good shape – get proper exercise and diet

8. Increase your number of trips – don't try to carry too much at one time

9. Take short breaks – pace yourself

10. Bend your knees – use your legs, not your back

*Information provided by
Wausau Insurance Companies*

Annual Salary and Fringe Benefits

Health Insurance rates again increase 20+ percent for 2004. This and the average employee wage increase of 3.5% effects the Grant County Budget tremendously.



Joyce Roling;
Grant County
Personnel Director

What is Grant County paying for your total 2004 salary and fringe benefits?

Example of a full-time employee making \$11.00 per hour.

<i>Annual Salary</i>	<i>\$11.00 x 2080 hours/year</i>	<i>\$ 22880.00</i>
<i>FICA Benefit</i>	<i>\$22880.00 x .0765</i>	<i>\$ 1750.32</i>
<i>Retirement Benefit</i>	<i>\$22880.00 x .113</i>	<i>\$ 2585.44</i>
<i>Health Insurance Benefit</i>	<i>\$1019.92 (County Share) per month x 12</i>	<i>\$ 12239.04</i>
<i>Life Insurance Benefit</i>	<i>\$2.60 per month x 12</i>	<i>\$ 31.20</i>
<i>Long Term Disability Benefit</i>	<i>\$.0043 x \$22880.00</i>	<i>\$ 98.38</i>
<i>AD&D Benefit</i>	<i>\$.30 per month x 12</i>	<i>\$ 3.60</i>
<i>TOTAL County Cost</i>		<i>\$39,587.98</i>

Our insurance increases are based on claims experience and plan design. What can we do to control the costs of health insurance?

First, let's look at claims experience. We can not control all illnesses or injuries, but we can be proactive in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and managing our health care.

- Eat right and exercise. Contact your health insurance provider and ask them about fitness programs that may be covered under your plan.
- Get involved with your healthcare. Ask your physician about generic drug alternatives and treatment alternatives. Does your plan have a mail order drug program? It is much more cost effective for maintenance drugs.
- Don't forget about routine physical exams and preventative services. It is not only important to monitor your health and take care of illnesses when they are discovered early, but it also saves.
- Emergency Room or Acute/Urgent Care? We all need to think about costs when and where we decide to go to the doctor. Generally, Grant County employees never see a bill. This is real nice, however, we tend to forget how much medical expenses are.

Emergency Room Visit	\$500.00
Acute Care/Urgent Care Visit	\$ 75.00
Office Visit	\$ 55.00 ¹

¹Source Medical Associates, Dubuque, IA

Annual Salary and Fringe Benefits continued...

Now, let's look at plan design. Do you know that Grant County saved \$25,000 in premiums for placing a 2M cap on Medical Associates Health plan for 2004? We could save even more by doing minor plan design changes.

Let's use Medical Associates Health Plan for an example.

Currently we have a HMO Full Pay Plan with \$5/\$10 RX Card & Vision. Our premium increase for 2004 is **21.4%**.

With the following options, we could have reduced our premium increase.

- Option 1. HMO Full Pay Plan with \$10/\$20 RX Card & Vision. Increase **17.6%**.
- Option 2. HMO \$10 Office Co-pay, \$75.00 ER Co-pay with \$5/\$10 RX Card & Vision. Increase **13.8%**.
- Option 3. HMO \$10 Office Co-pay, \$75.00 ER Co-pay with \$10/20 RX Card & Vision. Increase **10%**.

Let's all work together on this health care crisis. We need to start thinking about ways to maintain a good health plan and at the same time control the costs.

Halloween Word Scramble


1) DDDSEEBIIOM

2) SSSSOPE

3) HHGLIOUS

4) GTTEEOPLISR

5) SSMEOCTU



6) KSTTRREIC

7) EELKONST

8) NGSBLOI

9) BMOEZIS

10) SICWEHT

1) disembodied, 2) possesses, 3) ghoulish, 4) poltergeist, 5) costumes, 6) trickster, 7) skeleton, 8) goblins, 9) zombies, 10) witches

A Spooky Tradition..... The most celebrated Halloween decoration is the *jack-o'-lantern*, traditionally a hollowed-out pumpkin carved to resemble a grotesque face and illuminated by a candle placed inside. The jack-o'-lantern derives its name from a character in British folktales. According to these tales, the soul of a deceased person named Jack O'Lantern was barred from both heaven and hell and was condemned to wander the earth with his lantern. Orange and black, colors associated with pumpkins and darkness respectively, figure prominently in most Halloween decorations.

"Halloween," Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2003